

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

We write to express our deep concern about the detention and deportation of Southeast Asian refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In recent years, we have seen a spike in the arbitrary detention and removal of lawful permanent residents who came to the United States as refugees fleeing the violence and genocide from the Vietnam War and the Khmer Rouge genocide. We urge you to cease detentions and deportations of refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Many of those impacted were born in refugee camps and have never set foot in the countries to which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is trying to remove them. Upon arrival into the United States, many were resettled into struggling neighborhoods. Still coping with significant trauma from the war, some of these refugees made mistakes as teenagers and young adults and were funneled into the criminal justice system. All of them served their time, and the majority transformed their lives to become productive community members, business owners, and loving parents supporting their U.S citizen families. They have checked in dutifully with ICE, some for decades, only now to be suddenly arrested, detained, and deported.

We are concerned that the recent retaliatory visa sanctions from the Trump Administration pressuring Cambodia and Laos to accept deported people have propelled these mass detentions and deportations. Additionally, we are also concerned that the Administration's reinterpretation of the 2008 bilateral agreement between the United States and Vietnam will also lead to increased detentions and deportations of Vietnamese Americans.¹ The biggest round up of Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants for deportation took place in 2017.² Cambodia is currently on target to see record-breaking deportation numbers in 2018.³

¹ Charles Dunst & Krishnadev Calamur, *Trump Moves to Deport Vietnam War Refugees*, THE ATLANTIC (Dec. 12, 2018) available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/12/donald-trump-deport-vietnam-war-refugees/577993>.

² Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, "Cambodian Deportations to Begin" (Dec. 6, 2017) available at: <http://www.searac.org/our-voices/press-room/press-release-cambodian-deportations-begin>.

³ Kimberly Yam, *ICE Deports Another Refugee While You Weren't Paying Attention*, HUFFINGTON POST (Aug. 21, 2018) available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/us-deports-cambodian-refugees_us_5b7707b9e4b05906b4135dea

It is troubling to see Southeast Asian American families being targeted at unprecedented levels. We urge you to reexamine policies on the arbitrary detention and deportation of Southeast Asian Americans who prove no threat to public safety, are interwoven into our communities, and support U.S. citizen families. We urge you to use prosecutorial discretion to ensure that our finite resources are not being wasted to tear families apart and deport individuals who have transformed their lives after serving their sentences. Further, we request that you set up a briefing on your discussions with Vietnam, in particular to provide information on any deal with Vietnam to accept deported refugees.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact Krystal Ka'ai (krystal.ka'ai@mail.house.gov) or Jennifer Chan (jennifer.chan@mail.house.gov) to set up a briefing to address these questions no later than December 27, 2018.

Sincerely,



JUDY CHU
Member of Congress



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress



MADELEINE BORDALLO
Member of Congress



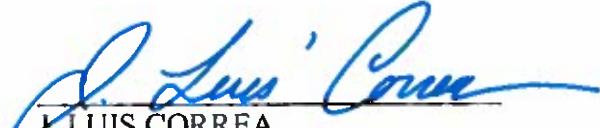
ANDRE CARSON
Member of Congress



DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress



YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress



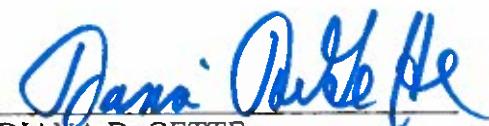
J. LUIS CORREA
Member of Congress



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress



ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress



DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress



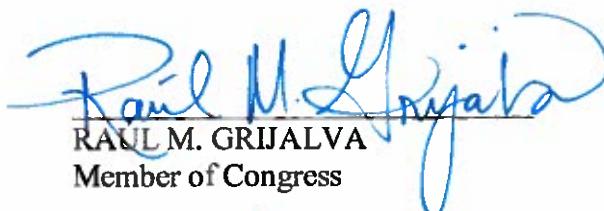
ROSA L. DELAUBRO
Member of Congress



ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress



AL GREEN
Member of Congress



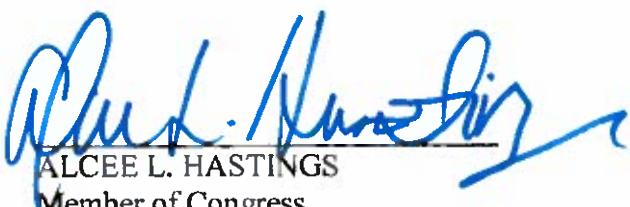
RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



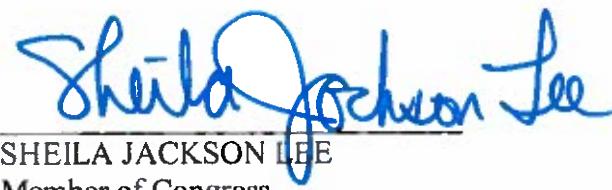
LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
Member of Congress



COLLEEN HANABUSA
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress

Hank Johnson

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna

RO KHANNA
Member of Congress

Ron Kind

RON KIND
Member of Congress

James Langevin

JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen

RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress

Brenda Lawrence

BRENDA L. LAWRENCE
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

John Lewis

JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu

TED W. LIEU
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal

ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum

BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress



JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress



GRACE MENG
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



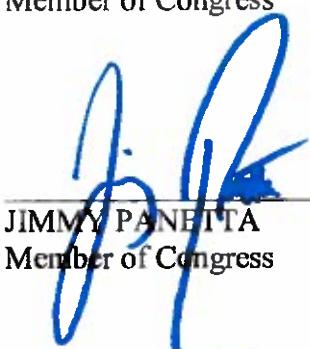
GRACE NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



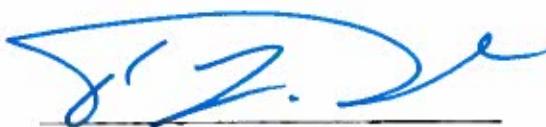
FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



MARK POCAN
Member of Congress



CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member of Congress



BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez

LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky

JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

Albio Sires

ALBIO SIRÉS
Member of Congress

Adam Smith

ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress

Mark Takano

MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez

NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman

BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas

NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley

MIKE QUIGLEY
Member of Congress

CAROLYN B. MALONEY

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress